



The BERTRAND RUSSELL RESEARCH CENTRE NEWSLETTER

McMaster University, Hamilton, Ont., Canada

Number 1, Autumn 2002

BRRRC HAS CHALLENGES TO MEET

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Bertrand Russell was one of the key thinkers who shaped the twentieth century. He brought about a revolution in philosophy which, even 100 years later, continues to have a profound impact on the way the subject is done through much of the world. But he also involved himself outside the academic world, and helped to create twentieth-century attitudes to education, to sexual morality, and to government. He was active for much of his life in practical politics, from the Edwardian campaign for women's suffrage to the peace movement of the 1960s. Russell contributed to almost every aspect of the intellectual and political life of the twentieth century; few other intellectuals have contributed so importantly and in so many different ways to the thought of their times. The Bertrand Russell Archives at McMaster University contain an astonishingly full record of all this activity. They are probably the most important collection anywhere in the world devoted to

the work of a single private individual.

The Bertrand Russell Research Centre was created in July 2000 to facilitate research on all aspects of Russell's life and work and to make the materials in the Archives more easily available to scholars around the world. One of the Centre's most important tasks is the completion of *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, a 35-volume critical edition of his shorter writings. Fifteen volumes have now been completed—the most recent is described elsewhere in this issue—and six more are in active preparation. In its first two years, thanks to the generosity of several private foundations, the Centre has been able to appoint three new editors and employ two additional researchers to work on the editorial apparatus of these volumes.

The Centre has also started work on a new editorial task, one much larger even than the *Collected Papers*: a complete edition of Russell's correspondence. This could well prove to be one of the largest scholarly editing projects ever undertaken. Russell was an unbelievably industrious correspondent, writing several letters almost every day of his life. The Russell Archives have about 40,000 letters written by him—the exact number is not known because the archival inventory of them

has not yet been completed—and more are discovered each year. To give a point of comparison, there are about 20,000 known letters by Voltaire and Theodore Besterman's edition of them runs to 107 volumes. The sheer scale of Russell's correspondence, as well as the fact that it is still being collected, makes a print edition impossible, but, given patience and resources, an electronic edition delivered over the world wide web is entirely feasible. The database for such an edition is now being designed, and future issues of the *Newsletter* will contain fuller descriptions of the project as it develops. Meanwhile, work on completing the electronic inventory of Russell's correspondence (known as BRACERS) has resumed under the direction of Kenneth Blackwell with a view to integrating it eventually with the edition of the letters themselves

The Centre publishes a journal, *Russell: the Journal of Bertrand Russell Studies*, which publishes scholarly articles on all aspects of Russell's life and work. It also hosts an internet discussion list on Russell, Russell-I.¹ The discussion list is not entirely academic and neither is the work of the Centre. Russell spoke to a very wide audience and the Centre hopes to remind that same audience of his legacy, for example, through a major TV documentary about his life and work. In 2001 the Centre hosted the annual conference of the Bertrand Russell Society, and plans are underway for conferences on specific aspects of Russell's work. Above all, we hope to support the research of scholars working on Russell in various parts of the world and in several different disciplines. Among the most gratifying



Clockwise from left: Carl Spadoni, James Chartrand, Michael Stevenson, Andy Bone, Nick Griffin, Lindsay Holdsworth, Arlene Duncan, Sarah Shulist, S. Turcon

developments of the Centre's first two years has been the emergence of an informal group of scholars, described elsewhere in this newsletter by Stephen Heathorn, some affiliated with the Centre and some not, who are working on Dora Russell and the Russells' experiments in education in the 1920s. But for the Centre, these scholars might not have known of each other's existence until their works started to appear in print. By sharing ideas and information we will achieve a much deeper knowledge of this

neglected and misunderstood aspect of the Russells' work.

In the two years since its creation, the Centre has accomplished a good deal, but a huge amount remains to be done. This is indeed an exciting time to be working on Russell.

Nicholas Griffin

MAN'S PERIL AT PRESS

The title of the latest volume of *Collected Papers* to go to press is taken from one of Russell's best-known short essays. Indeed, the *Collected Papers* project was conceived, in part, to showcase such masterful uses of the essay form as "Man's Peril". Its closing call, "as a human being to human beings: remember your humanity, and forget the rest", is probably the most frequently quoted of Russell's many pronouncements on the subject of nuclear weapons—the issue which came to dominate his writing and political activities well into the 1960s.

"Man's Peril" is a landmark Russell text and not only because of the measured eloquence of its solemn yet hopeful appeal. It was written in December 1954 at a dangerously unstable juncture in the Cold War. World opinion had been

¹ To join the list fill out the form using the link on the BRRC website; the url is in the **What's New** column.



Andrew G. Bone

roused by the devastating force of the thermonuclear test carried out by the United States on the Bikini atoll the previous March. Russell was able to strike a chord because of the rising public anxiety about hydrogen-bomb warfare and the potentially lethal radiation released by the experimental explosion of nuclear weapons. The points raised by Russell's essay—the certain devastation of a hydrogen-bomb war, the futility of Cold War political posturing, and the vital role of neutral states in brokering détente—convey the central preoccupations of his thinking about international politics in the mid-1950s. As Russell himself recalled in his *Autobiography*, “Man’s Peril” was “a distilled version of all that I had said theretofore”. More importantly, its extraordinary impact jolted Russell back to the centre of public life in Britain. The peace campaigning of which we glimpse the first stirrings in *Collected Papers* 28 continued in various guises more or less without interruption until his death in 1970.

Russell reached a far larger audience than usual with “Man’s Peril” because it was broadcast on BBC radio before it appeared in print. It is estimated that some six or seven million people heard Russell when he spoke at peak listening time on the “Home Service” on the evening of 23 December 1954. From the vantage point of contemporary celebrity culture, it is difficult to imagine that many of the “stars” of sound broadcasting in the era when the BBC enjoyed a monopoly were staid public intellectuals such as Russell, the historian G.M. Trevelyan, or the novelist and scientific writer, C.P. Snow. Russell was highly valued by the “Corporation”, and was asked regularly to speak on a wide variety of themes for both domestic and foreign audiences. He met most of these requests, but with “Man’s Peril” he used his standing at the BBC to advance his own agenda.

In a letter written in July 1954, Russell told a BBC producer that he was “deeply troubled about the prospects for

mankind in view of the H-bomb” and wondered whether he might be allowed to do a broadcast “to awaken people to the gravity of the issue”. Originally Russell intended to base his talk on the last chapter of his most recent book, *Human Society in Ethics and Politics* (1954). But the BBC producer in question was so enthusiastic that he commissioned an original piece, to be broadcast on a special occasion at the year’s end. About a month before then, however, the BBC seemed to have changed its mind about Russell’s talk. He was now asked to make his contribution part of a series in which three different generations would comment on world politics. Russell objected strenuously to this proposal, and in a withering reply he told the BBC that they should have “no difficulty in finding some old man who will do”.

Thus, the most celebrated of Russell’s many talks for the BBC was very nearly cancelled. But his protests achieved the desired effect: the “three generations” idea was scrapped and Russell’s original plan was revived. He responded with a powerful radio performance that stimulated a huge weight of press commentary and private correspondence. The reception to the talk persuaded him to embark on peace campaigning in earnest and, as a first step, to draft another famous text (also featured in *Collected Papers* 28)—the declaration of scientists against nuclear war that became known as “The Russell–Einstein Manifesto”.

Andrew G. Bone²

BEACON HILL: RESEARCH GROUP

Bertrand and Dora Russell’s educational experiment—their school, Beacon Hill—is finally getting the scholarly attention it deserves. An informal research group is developing around the topic of the school and the Russells as educational pioneers.

Bertrand and Dora aimed to put their ideas about education and youth socialization into practice at Beacon Hill. Russell had published a stream of articles and books in the 1920s that touched on the deficiencies of his own generation’s educational

² Vol. 28, *Man’s Peril, 1954–55* is the fifteenth volume to be published in Russell’s *Collected Papers*. Bone is currently at work on Vol. 29, *Détente or Destruction, 1955–57*.

experience, including, most famously, his 1926 book, *On Education*. Dora, meanwhile, had published her own book that dealt, in part with education—*The Right to Be Happy* (1927). By the mid-1920s, with their own children, John and Kate, approaching school age, the Russells pondered how to best apply their ideals to the upbringing of the two. They considered the institutions of contemporary pioneers, particularly A.S. Neill's Summerhill School—which perhaps matched closest to their own ideals amongst the experimental schools then operating—but decided that it was not quite right. Russell, in particular, believed in the humanizing potential of knowledge, which needed to be put in balance with the lack of emotional repression and child-centred learning that were the hallmark of Summerhill. Like the Elmhursts, the founders of Dartington Hall School, and Geoffrey Pike, the founder of Malting House School, the Russells ultimately determined that the best way to ensure that their children got the best education was to do it themselves. Thus, in a very literal sense, they put their money where their mouths were, for Russell was required to go on several lecture tours (and Dora one) in the USA to generate the money needed to subsidize the project. Beacon Hill School opened in September 1927 with five American and seven English children attending, including Kate and John. The school's prospectus claimed that the school aimed to turn out children equipped for the modern world, not "listless intellectuals", but rather, responsible and hopeful individuals "conscious that there are great things to be done." Russell's involvement with this educational experiment would last for about five years, while Dora—who in practice ran the day-to-day operation of the school—would continue the experiment into the early 1940s after her relationship with Russell collapsed.

Despite the pioneering nature of the Beacon Hill project, it has received remarkably little scholarly interest—that is, until now. The editing of Vol. 18 of the *Collected Papers* is now underway, a volume that begins with the opening of Beacon Hill. The editors, William Bruneau and myself, will have the school, the educational theory behind it, and Russell's activities that helped subsidize it, front and centre in their editing. Bruneau is editing Russell's specialized educational writings for Vols. 17–20 of the *Collected Papers*. I will be handling the majority of the papers in Vol. 18, many of which touch on, or are influenced by, Russell's views on education. In addition to the editors and their busy team of research assistants, two other

Canadian scholars have developed an interest in the school and, specifically, Dora Russell's participation in the experiment. Deborah Gorham of Carleton University has been lately digging through the Russell Archives in her search for material on Dora's views and involvement with the school, assembling material for a larger project on feminist pioneers in the field of education in the interwar period. Stephen Brooke of York University is similarly engaged in studying Dora's involvement in a number of organizations and causes in the 1920s and 1930s, particularly on the issue of sexuality. Lastly, due to the generosity of the Metcalf Foundation, the McMaster History department has a fellowship available to an incoming doctoral candidate to subsidize the researching of a dissertation on the subject of Beacon Hill School.

With such a pool of expertise and interest in Beacon Hill and the Russells' educational views now developing, it is expected that the relative neglect of this experiment in the scholarly literature will soon be over, and indeed, there is a strong possibility of the Russell Centre hosting a conference on the topic of Russell and education when the fruits of this current burst of research activity have reached press.

Stephen Heathorn³

STUDENT REFLECTIONS ON BRRRC

Students play a vital role in the work of the Russell Centre. In 2001–02 Cory Wendorf and Sarah Shulist were employed. Cory added information on Russell's correspondence into the BRACERS database. Sarah did research for the *Collected Papers*. Cory was a mature student with eight years experience in the purchasing field when he came to McMaster in 2000. This year he graduated with an Hons. B.A. in philosophy. Sarah began her studies at McMaster in 1998 and has just graduated with an Hons. B.A. in comparative literature and linguistics. Both students are on the Dean's honour list; Sarah won the Dean's medal for excellence in the humanities.

Q: What did you learn while working for the Centre?
CORY: By far, the greatest piece of knowledge I took away

³ See **What's New** for further information on Heathorn and Bruneau.

was an appreciation of world events, and the interrelation between them. In our modern age, history is often written with a revisionist angle and thus strays from the actual events. The Russell Archives allow one to actually read what people involved in these events were experiencing. For instance, my appreciation of the Sino-Indian conflict was much enhanced by reading the correspondence between Russell, Nehru, and Chou En-lai. These letters provided more in-depth analysis of the situation than any modern revisionist history book.

SARAH: I've picked up an incredible amount of general knowledge, as well as knowledge of the process of producing a work like the *Collected Papers*. Prior to joining the Centre, I had very little knowledge of, or interest in, history. Having now been exposed to varying amounts of information on twentieth-century world history as well as British history, I realize that I may have dismissed history as a discipline too easily. I've also been exposed to the kind of terminology and processes that are involved in editing for publication.

Q: What skills were gained for future employment?

CORY: I gained experience in researching and the ability to spot patterns when shifting through large amounts of data—a skill set that will serve me well in graduate school.

SARAH: Since I intend to pursue an academic career, I will be able to use the research skills I've developed here. I've become much more able to sift through a lot of information, pick out the important parts, and condense them into brief notes. The independence encouraged by this job has also been vital since independence will be expected at graduate school. More than anything else I've done as an undergraduate, my employment at the Russell Centre has provided me with the skills I will need in the future.

Q: What are your plans after leaving the Centre?

CORY: I accepted an offer to study at the University of Dalhousie's Faculty of Management, for a master's degree in environmental studies. After that, I hope to complete my doctorate and obtain a teaching or research position.

SARAH: I've been accepted at the University of Alberta to work on graduate degrees in linguistics, specializing in endangered indigenous languages of Canada.

Sheila Turcon

ENDOWMENT NEEDED

In 1968 William Ready had the vision and foresight to acquire the Bertrand Russell Archives for McMaster University. He had made a similar coup some years earlier at Marquette University where he arranged the purchase of the archives of J.R.R. Tolkien. Ready believed that a university of McMaster's stature requires primary materials of this kind to foster scholarship in the humanities and social sciences.

Russell's archives span a century of extraordinary activity from the later years of Lord John Russell, Bertrand's grandfather who was twice Prime Minister of England, to the turbulent decade of political unrest in the 1960s. Russell's papers have been specially designated by McMaster University as its prestige collection. The University Library attempts in many ways to provide access to the varied aspects of the Russell Archives, to publicize its importance, and to serve researchers in Russell studies. In addition to housing Russell's archives and his own library, we have obtained copies of Russell's essays in printed form and multiple editions and translations of his works. We have built a supplementary library of secondary literature related to the people, events, and issues in Russell's life and thought. We have also bolstered the Archives by acquisitions outside of the Russell estate. We try to acquire letters and manuscripts whenever they come up for sale. On certain occasions we have acquired cognate archives such as the papers of Anton Felton, Lady Constance Malleon, and Rupert Crawshay-Williams.

Maintaining the Russell Archives is a challenging and continuing responsibility. Many volumes of his impressive library of 3,300 books, for example, are in need of repair and conservation. In spite of the generosity of donors such as Michael Walsh and J.B. Neilands who have recently given us manuscripts and letters, by necessity we are forced to purchase materials on an ongoing basis. New books pertaining to Russell studies are always being published. In the last year, for example, we have acquired books such as Carole Seymour-Jones's *Painted Shadow: The Life of Vivienne Eliot* and the two volumes of correspondence between Russell and Louis Couturat ably edited by Anne-Françoise Schmid.

In the past the University Library has been able to rise to the challenge of administering the Russell Archives at the highest standard. The staff takes pride in serving the public to the best of our abilities. In times of financial constraint and staff

cutbacks, this has not been easy. We have not always been able to purchase the materials that we have attempted to acquire at auction or through antiquarian dealers. A recent case in point was the auction by Butterfields in San Francisco of Russell's manuscript "Mysticism and Logic". The University Library obtained pledges of US\$15,000 to purchase the manuscript, but we were the underbidder at the auction. The manuscript was eventually sold by three antiquarian dealers to a private collector for US\$45,000.⁴

The University Library is seeking to create an endowment of \$150,000 to purchase manuscripts and books related to Russell studies. An endowment such as this will not automatically ensure our success in purchasing unique documents and research materials. But it will make that likelihood all the greater, and it will lessen the financial burden in other areas of library expenditure. We hope that you will be able to make a financial pledge in support of this exciting research endeavour.

Carl Spadoni
Research Collections Librarian

WHAT'S NEW



Website Visit our website which is updated regularly. It contains information on editors, staff, board members, and visitors as well as progress of volumes:
www.humanities.mcmaster.ca/~russell/



Staff Michael Stevenson and James Chartrand have been hired and Sheila Turcon has rejoined the Centre. Michael Stevenson is assisting the editors of Vols. 16, 17, and 30 of the *Collected Papers*. James Chartrand is providing the computer programming to get the *Collected Letters* project underway. Sheila Turcon edited this first number of the newsletter and is also working on chronologies for several of the volumes.



Editors David Blitz, a philosopher at Central Connecticut State University, is editing Vol. 30, *Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, 1957–60*. William Bruneau, an historian at the University of British

Columbia, is editing Russell's educational writings for Vols. 17–20. Stephen Heathorn, a British historian at McMaster, is editing Vol. 18, *Science, Sex and Society, 1927–31*.



Documentary The Centre is collaborating with Redcanoe Productions in making a television documentary. Called "The Three Passions of Bertrand Russell", it will be aired in three one-hour episodes, each devoted to one of the passions that Russell identified in the Prologue to his *Autobiography* as having guided his life: love, knowledge, and pity for the suffering of humanity.



Advisory Board An advisory board consisting of twelve members was created in 2001 to provide public input into the activities of the Centre, and to assist the director, staff and Dean of Humanities in the promotion and advancement of the Centre's activities.



Noam Chomsky Noam Chomsky, professor of linguistics at MIT and well-known political dissenter, will visit McMaster University to give the Bertrand Russell Peace Lecture on 14 November.



Award The Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections won the Archives Association of Ontario Institutional Award for 2002. The citation reads in part: "for the fostering of the Bertrand Russell archives as an international resource base for Russell studies ... and the scholarly commitment of the Division's staff to the academic life at McMaster University."



Donors Our major donors are the Atkinson Foundation, the Cyrus Eaton Foundation, the Metcalf Foundation, the Newton Trust, the Samuel Rodgers Memorial Trust and the Tokyo Club. We are very grateful for their valuable support.



Exhibition Handlist The Centre has published *Bertrand Russell's Odyssey: Exhibition Handlist*, a wide-format, photographic record of the exhibition held in the fall of 2000 in celebration of the opening of the Centre. It complements the previously printed *Odyssey* brochure. Copies are available for purchase from the Centre for US\$10.

This newsletter is published annually by the Bertrand Russell Research Centre, McMaster University, Hamilton, ON, Canada L8S 4M2.

Editor: Sheila Turcon. BRRC contact: duncana@mcmaster.ca

Preliminary design of this newsletter by Jordan Hall. Completed by Ken Blackwell with the assistance of Royce Yadav. Photography by Jordan Hall. Russell portrait by Carola Spaeth Hauschka (Russell Archives).

⁴ See my "The Manuscript of 'Mysticism and Logic' at Auction", *The Bertrand Russell Society Quarterly*, no. 111 (Aug. 2001): 23–4.